

# ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

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## Co-Chairs:

Hon. Bradley Erck  
Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD

## Minutes of Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Meeting December 6, 2002

## Members:

James Allen  
Robert Blanchard  
Daniel Boody  
Hon. Clyde Burmaster  
Hon. Elise Cusack  
Hon. David Dale  
Hon. William Davignon  
Brian Eldridge  
Hon. Wright Ellis  
Samuel Ferraro  
Hon. Samuel Granieri  
Maria Lehman  
Hon. Peter McMahon  
Hon. Gerald Meal  
Lawrence Meckler  
Hal Morse  
Laurence Rubin  
Hon. Mark Schroeder  
Kevin Schuler  
John Simon  
Hector Titus  
Peter Wendel

**Present:** Erck, Weinstein, Allen, Burmaster, Cusack, Dale, Ferraro, Lehman (proxy), Meal, Morse, Schroeder, Schuler (proxy), Simon, Wendel, DeBenedetti, Rich (proxy), Sheffer

**Excused:** Eldridge, Ellis, McMahon, Rubin

**Absent:** Blanchard, Boody, Davignon, Granieri, Meckler, Titus, Casale, Geiger, Rydelek

The meeting was called to order at 8:07 a.m. by Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Co-Chairs Bradley Erck and Barry Weinstein, MD. Minutes of the October, 2002 meeting were approved.

## Ad Hoc:

Michael Casale  
Hon. Albert DeBenedetti  
Richard Geiger  
Luke Rich  
Stan Rydelek  
John Sheffer, II

ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk gave an update of projects listed in the October minutes. Both Legislatures passed resolutions in support of trackage rights for a tourist rail project, and in support of the Niagara Airport Development Corporation's proposal for the Niagara Falls International Airport. Both counties are working together on the MUNIIX project, with a goal of implementing it in 2004.

## Administrator:

Tod A. Kniazuk

ENRP Ad Hoc Member John Sheffer, II presented the group with the Economic Development Working Group's final report, entitled "One-Stop Shop The Urgent Need for a Seamless, User-Driven Economic Development Strategy and Delivery System in the Erie-Niagara Region." While the EDWG, formed by the ENRP in June, 2002, was originally charged with developing recommendations for the creation of a one stop shop for economic development, they quickly determined that a comprehensive economic development strategy for the two counties is first needed.

To that end, the EDWG analyzed the current state of economic development in Erie and Niagara counties, and produced a set of 14 recommendations encompassing the current picture, vision for regional economic development, creation of a regional strategy, and regional governance – a one-stop shop.

Sheffer noted that while the report was generated for Erie and Niagara, economic development should be looked at even more regionally in the long run. He thanked the EDWG for its efforts, and noted that he hopes this report will “ratchet up the effort” on this most important matter. Sheffer also mentioned that the EDWG strategy committee stressed that unless there is a buy-in for this, it will fail. In the past few weeks as the draft report has been circulated, however, he is encouraged.

Co-Chair Weinstein thanked Sheffer for his chairmanship of the committee, and proceeded to portion out the 14 recommendations for further work. One and two will be done by legislative staff prior to the next general meeting, three was left for further consideration, four will go to the ENRP Government Affairs Subcommittee, five will be open for further input, six through nine will see a funding mechanism developed and wide distribution of our effort to accomplish these goals, ten will be handled by the ENRP co-chairs, administrator, and Sheffer, eleven is deferred until we have private sector buy-in, twelve and thirteen follow eleven, and on fourteen – the actual creation of the one stop shop – we want to either see it done or be given a reason why it can’t be done.

Weinstein’s goal is to establish the steering committee in the next few weeks, have them create a strategy in the next four months, then re-focus their attention on creation of the one stop shop. Co-Chair Erck added that while government is often criticized for operating too slowly, we really got this done on a fast track. After additional suggestions were made on distribution and publicity, the ENRP unanimously approved the contents of the report.

Following discussion in the ENRP Transportation Subcommittee, the group heard Subcommittee Chair Hal Morse give a presentation on the ongoing Peace Bridge public input effort. In light of new requirements for plaza acreage, the Transportation Subcommittee felt that alternatives such as the Tonawanda option should be left on the table to get a full environmental review. The group approved sending a letter to that effect to be made part of the review process.

Subcommittee Chair John Simon presented the Economic Development Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed. Simon reported that the Seneca Niagara Casino is employing 2,500 people, and they are having trouble filling some of these positions. People are even moving into the area for these jobs, and other businesses such as hotels are losing workers to the casino. This is driving wages up, showing a dramatic impact in a short period of time.

ENRP Administrator Kniazuk presented the Government Affairs Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed. It was mentioned

that homeland security is an issue that should be looked at more closely in 2003, including the next round of base closures scheduled for 2005.

ENRP Administrator Kniazuk presented the Tourism & Culture Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed. Former subcommittee chair John Greenan and former member Patrick Keyes were thanked for their efforts to the subcommittee and the ENRP.

Subcommittee Chair Hal Morse presented the Transportation Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed. Jody Clark and Dennis Linn of the Seneca Nation of Indians were welcomed as observers. Two work items for 2003 were mentioned – the GBNRTC functional transportation survey, and the CSX/Norfolk Southern maintenance and repair schedule for bridges and right of ways.

ENRP Member Simon gave an update on the Niagara Falls International Airport (NFIA). He thanked the two legislatures for their resolutions in support of the NADC's plan, and noted that there has been some contact made on air cargo at the airport (though none yet on charters).

ENRP Member Samuel Ferraro gave an update on the Framework for Regional Growth. A consultant has been chosen, and they are looking to get underway in early 2003. The time frame for the consultant's work has been shortened from 20 months to between 13 and 14 months. The EDWG's work will be incorporated into the Framework. Ferraro also gave an update on power relicensing. December 18 is the kickoff for the stakeholder meetings. The first phase is to be completed by April 30, 2003.

There was no old business. Under new business Simon asked if low cost power should be an issue for ENRP to pursue in 2003. Ferraro replied that it is a piece of the relicensing effort. Simon agreed, but added that perhaps we could do a short term since power relicensing will still take a few years. The issue was referred to the Economic Development Subcommittee. Other issues mentioned for further consideration were Assemblyman Higgins' waterfront efforts and the Buffalo Niagara Enterprise's Retention Team.

The Co-Chairs thanked the members, administrator, and friends for a successful year; a sentiment that was reiterated by ENRP Member Peter Wendel and Ad Hoc Member Albert DeBenedetti, who recognized what he called the "extraordinary progress" of the group. The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 a.m.

Submitted by Tod A. Kniazuk  
November 29, 2002